



Study of moral and prosocial norms in sport

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to reveal the attitude of athletes to the adoption of prosocial and moral norms in sports in the conditions of competitive activity.

Methods and structure of the study. To study and clarify the problem under study among Russian athletes, focus group interviews were conducted (7 groups of 8 people). The test contingent consisted of 56 qualified athletes and amateur athletes - members of the All-Russian, regional, student sports teams from the cities of Moscow and Ivanovo.

Results and conclusions. In the studied sample, half of the respondents consider honesty and respect for the opponent to be the personal qualities of an ideal athlete, along with purposefulness and resistance to stress. For 80% of athletes, it is important to play fair, to show respect and nobility to opponents, along with the desire to win the competition. Fair play is more associated with following the rules, less with helping behavior in sports. Among the forms of providing assistance and receiving assistance from opponents, the respondents most often named assistance with sports equipment or equipment, assistance with water, accompanying the injured, and moral support. At the same time, athletes do not expect help from rivals. Almost all respondents come across sports content on social networks that talks about examples of helping behavior and nobility in sports, but they themselves do not create or distribute such content. The need for professional training of coaches in the field of sports ethics indicated by the respondents and the fact that the coach is more often a model of moral norms in sports indicates the importance of creating a moral atmosphere based on the principles of fair play in a sports team or national team.

Keywords: *moral norms, prosocial norms, sports behavior, helping behavior, fair play, sports psychology.*

Introduction. Researchers in the field of pedagogy and psychology of sports point to the need to study the impact of sports on various aspects of personal and social development, including moral and prosocial norms [1, 2, 6]. The Council of Europe (1992) Code of Sports Ethics "Fair Play – Path to Victory" recommends that athletes "refuse any form of violence against an opponent; assist an opponent or other person in danger or in difficulty in a normal competitive situation; refrain from any advantage that is not the result of their own successful competitive actions. Sports behavior is based on such moral norms as justice, self-control, courage, perseverance and is associated with the preservation of self-control in interpersonal interaction. Sports behavior can take the form of pro-social behavior, where an athlete who prioritizes fair play can help an opponent, even at the ex-

pense of personal victory. Unsportsmanlike (asocial) behavior may include various forms of dishonest play (deception or fraud) - the desire to gain an advantage by violating the rules of the game, despite the possible punishment ("professional foul"); the desire to gain an advantage without violating the rules, but undermining the competitive (sports) spirit. The study of the moral and prosocial (vs asocial) norms of athletes is aimed at measuring its axiological, motivational, interpersonal and meaningful characteristics [1, 2, 4-6].

Objective of the study was to reveal the attitude of athletes to the adoption of prosocial and moral norms in sports in the conditions of competitive activity.

Methods and structure of the study. To conduct an empirical study, the focus group method was chosen, which is often used to study and clarify the problem among the target group [3]. For the focus group, a



guide was developed that included 15 questions related to the values, motives, perceptions, attitudes and experiences of athletes in demonstrating pro-social (helping) and moral behavior, as well as aggression and cheating in sports. Through sports associations, qualified athletes and amateur athletes, members of all-Russian, regional, student sports teams from the cities of Moscow and Ivanovo, were involved in the study. Interviews were conducted with 7 groups of 8 people each: age from 18 to 35 years; men - 57%, women - 43%; team sports (volleyball, basketball, football) - 60%, individual sports (athletics, chess, skiing, swimming, wrestling, artistic gymnastics) - 40%; masters of sports - 36%, candidates for masters of sports - 32%, those with sports categories - 14%, those without sports categories - 18%. The leading focus groups were two specialists in the field of sports pedagogy and psychology, who in the past were actively involved in sports and participated in competitions, which facilitated the establishment of contact with the respondents and ensured their involvement in the discussion of the proposed issues. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to content analysis. Interviews lasted an average of 80 minutes.

Results of the study and their discussion. To immerse themselves in the problem under discussion, at the beginning of the focus groups, the respondents were offered to watch a short video about noble deeds in sports with examples of helping behavior of famous athletes, posted on a social network (for example, one of the stories told about how at the Olympics in Rio in 2016, two athletes fell during a 5 km race, after which one of them, instead of continuing the race, helped the other to get up, they ran in the tail all the race, after the finish the girls hugged and heartily thanked each other for their help). After watching the video, the attention of the participants was focused on examples of personal sports experience. Each of the athletes, answering questions, relied solely on their sports activities, confirming each opinion with examples.

The interviews began with a neutral question about what personal qualities an ideal athlete should have. Among such qualities, the majority of participants named purposefulness, diligence, stress resistance. At the same time, more than half of the respondents also highlighted honesty, respect for the opponent, nobility, and humanity. In a single case, egoism, focus on victory and the highest result, as well as sports anger, which helps to compete and fight back, were named, without which, according to the respondent, the whole meaning of the competition is lost.

Further, to study value orientations, the respondents were asked how important it is for them to play honestly, to show respect and nobility to rivals, along with the desire to win competitions. The answers showed that fair play is important for almost everyone. About 20% of the participants never thought about it. In one of the focus groups, the opposite answer was heard, that one should not always respect the opponent and, moreover, show nobility towards him, and the desire to win the competition should come first.

With the concept of Fair play (fair play in sports), respondents associate competitions according to the rules, without the use of doping and observance of ethical rules, noble behavior and respect for the opponent, sports referees. With foul play - violation of the rules, biased refereeing, bribery, cheating (for example, dummy athletes from a different age category), as well as unsportsmanlike conduct, doping. There was also an opinion that dishonest play is only what is prohibited by the approved rules in this sport. And vice versa, what is not prohibited is allowed, which means that it can be applied to achieve the highest sports result and win competitions. All respondents believe that penalties for unsportsmanlike behavior in their sport are effective and should not be tightened.

To the question "Who for you is a model of noble and honest behavior in sports?" in 60% of cases the answer was - the coach. Some respondents gave examples of famous athletes from their sport. Less commonly, such examples were sports parents (10%), teammates (10%) or a collective image (for example, the national volleyball team) (20%). In 20% of cases, focus group participants found it difficult to give an example and answer this question.

Among the forms of help from rivals (they saw how another athlete was helped or was given help), respondents most often called help sports equipment or equipment (jackets, wrestling shoes, spikes, a pole, a ball, etc.) (70%), help with water (20%), accompanying the injured to the bench or ambulance (18%), moral support or advice (40%). Similarly, respondents themselves have ever helped an opponent or teammate during a competition.

To the question "Why do some athletes help injured opponents in competitions, even if in doing so they endanger their own victory?" all participants in the study were similar in their opinion that it is important for them to win in a noble, honest struggle; for a number of respondents, victory is not the main thing, much more important is humanity, health, and perhaps this is the price of a saved life. However, some of the respond-



ents (mostly representatives of individual sports) noted that at all competitions, there are medical workers, so they most likely would not jeopardize their own victory and would only help after completing the distance or competition.

Also, all respondents believe that mutual assistance should be shown in all sports: there is an unspoken sports brotherhood, and everyone needs help. At the same time, none of the respondents expect help and support from other athletes during the competition or do not think about it.

Approximately half of the respondents spoke out against violence (physical and psychological) in any sport. The other half are of the opinion that physical violence and controlled aggression within the rules should be present in contact sports (basketball, boxing, wrestling) otherwise they will lose their competitive meaning and entertainment.

Almost all participants in the study agree that the system of youth and youth sports should include training on sports ethics (in sports schools, sections, colleges, universities). However, to a greater extent, this is necessary in the preparation of coaching staff, because the basics of sports ethics, according to the respondents, should be instilled by the coach, and the moral atmosphere in the team or national team depends on him.

Taking into account the strong influence of social network content on the attitudes and motives of people in all areas, including sports, during a focused interview, issues of informational behavior of athletes were discussed. The survey showed that every fourth respondent posts information (photos, short videos) about their training, equipment, competitions, victories in a personal account of any social network. However, none of the participants broadcast information about helping behavior and nobility in sports on social networks. The greatest attention of athletes is attracted by content about the training and competitive process. At the same time, 90% of respondents come across sports content on social networks, which tells about examples of helping behavior, the nobility of athletes, fair play, as well as content about aggression, unfair play in sports. About a third of respondents noted a big buzz around content about aggression, foul play, and doping scandals.

Analyzing the answers of respondents depending on the level of their sports qualification and sport, we have established the following patterns: athletes involved in individual sports show a higher level of

prosociality in relation to an opponent in comparison with athletes involved in team sports; athletes in contact sports, to a greater extent, allow aggression and violence against an opponent than in low-contact sports; professionalism in sports, closely associated with strong competition and a strong focus on winning, is a significant reason for the rejection of pro-social norms. These patterns are generally consistent with foreign studies [4-6].

Conclusions. As the study showed, moral and pro-social norms in sports, dictated by the principles of Olympism and fair play, are in general demanded by athletes, at the same time, they are determined by a complex of factors (level of professionalism, sport, sports situations, etc.). It should be noted that going in for sports in itself is not a sufficient condition for the moral development of an athlete, it is necessary that at the macro level and at the level of a separate team or team an atmosphere of fair play be created, moral standards and respect for rivals should be observed.

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